

Virginia Saltwater Development Fund Evaluation of a Proposal for the Development of a Research or Data Collection Project

Project Number: 1206-14

Date: 2 March 07

Title: N) Abundance, Distribution and Biology of Sharks and Rays in Chesapeake Bay and Virginia's Coastal Lagoons: Continuation of a Long-term Monitoring and Research Program.

“The Virginia Saltwater Recreational Fishing Development Fund is to be used solely for the purpose of conserving and enhancing finfish taken by recreational anglers, enforcing laws related to natural resource conservation, improving recreational fishing opportunities, obtaining necessary data and conducting research for fisheries management, and creating or restoring habitat for species taken by recreational fishermen.”

Code of Virginia, Section 28.2-302.3

NOTE: Please read the entire scoresheet before beginning, then provide comments, and circle () the appropriate score for each item. Thank You.

A. Problem Description and Resolution (20 points)

- 1. Comment on the adequacy of the problem description, background information, knowledge of available literature/data sources, and anticipated benefits.**

Very complete but I suggest the addition of recent MRFSS data, specific for Virginia.

- 2. Describe your views on the conceptual approach to solve the problem.**

The bulk of the project follows the established protocol of a valuable, long-term monitoring program, begun in 1974. More recent additions to this monitoring effort utilize modern genetic methods to estimate population size and determine lineage. The acoustic tagging used is rapidly gaining popularity by researchers as means of obtaining more detailed information on movement. The RFAB recently funded a flounder project, which used these methods. Research in Virginia using acoustic tagging has also been done on American Shad. Acoustic tags have also been used to track Atlantic sturgeon in the Hudson River area.

SCORE (Circle one)	Poor				Excellent
	0	5	10	15	20

B. Soundness of Project Design/Technical Approach (25 points)

1. Is there sufficient information to technically evaluate the proposal?

Yes, I detect no flaws and look forward to reviewing its findings.

2. What are the strengths/weaknesses of the project design (thoroughness, practicality, methods, integration with other work, etc.)?

The greatest strength of the core-monitoring project is its continuous stream of data since 1974.

SCORE (Circle One)	Poor					Excellent
	0	5	10	15	20	25

C. Project Management and Experience/Qualifications of Personnel (15 points)

What is your opinion of the experience and capabilities of the Principal Investigator(s) to manage and conduct the work, the availability of facilities, and education and experience of assisting personnel.

The PI's (Musick and Gruggs) and VIMS facilities have an excellent record for this type of research.

SCORE (Circle one)	Poor			Excellent
	0	5	10	15

D. Project costs (15 points)

Is the budget realistic and reasonable? Indicate any unreasonable costs.

Yes, the bulk of the request is for disposable lab and field supplies and vessel rental that will augment the federal monies received from the National Shark Research Consortium. Is the RFAB charged a standard federal rate for VIMS vessel time?

SCORE (circle One)	Poor			Excellent
	0	5	10	15

E. Value of the Project to Fisheries Managers (25 points)

Do you believe the results of this project will further management of the species described? Will the results be useful to managers?

The VIMS long line survey has played a major role in the management of the Large Coastal Species (LCS) species complex found along the Atlantic Coast, and in particular, has provided significant guidance for specific regulations adopted in state waters by the VMRC. It is very important for the management of the LCS species group that this monitoring work continues.

SCORE (circle one)	Poor					Excellent
	0	5	10	15	20	25

PLEASE ADD ANY FURTHER COMMENTS ON THE PROPOSALS BELOW:

The LCS species complex definitely contributes significantly to the web of angling opportunities and experiences available in Virginia. Sandbar sharks are the most abundant LCS in Virginia waters, and therefore, provide the most probable opportunity for Virginia recreational anglers to experience catching a large shark in relatively protected waters. Sandbar sharks in excess of 54 inches (the current minimum size limit) do frequent Virginia waters and their meat is considered good quality, making these animals important to the recreational fishing community for both catch-and-release and table fare. The emergency nature of the current budget shortfall warrants support from the RFAB. However, if this proposal is the beginning of a long term funding commitment, the monitoring portion of the program, which dates to 1974, should be given the highest funding priority.